

FINAL

**118TH MEETING OF THE NATIONAL CANCER ADVISORY BOARD
JOINT MEETING OF THE AD HOC SUBCOMMITTEE ON COMMUNICATIONS
AND THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON PLANNING AND BUDGET**

**May 22, 2001
12:00 p.m. - 1:00 p.m.**

Welcome/Opening Remarks—Dr. Susan Love/Dr. Susan Sieber

Dr. Susan Love chaired the joint meeting of the Ad Hoc Subcommittee on Communications and the Subcommittee on Planning and Budget with Dr. Susan Sieber, Director, Office of Communications (OC), serving as Executive Secretary. Dr. Love welcomed Subcommittee members and attendees and briefly reviewed the agenda. Dr. Sieber presented a brief overview of the new structure of the OC. The Office of Liaison Activities; Office of Cancer Information, Communication, and Education; and Office of Cancer Communications were merged into one entity forming the new Office of Communications. The OC consists of five programs and the overall mission of this Office is to provide a comprehensive, integrated, and technology-supported communications capability to ensure rapid, accurate, and consistent communications with all NCI constituencies.

Office of Communications Program Presentations

The Associate Directors of the five programs constituting the OC gave a brief presentation describing the mission, goals, functions, and current activities of each program. The *Cancer Information Products and Systems Program* is overseen by Dr. Anne Thurn. This Program is responsible for content development, maintenance, and delivery of products such as NCI's 135 Web sites. The *Communications Coordination Program* is directed by Ms. Nelvis Castro. This Program coordinates the development, maintenance, and integration of research information using evidence-based strategies to reach diverse audiences. The *Outreach and Partnership Program* is directed by Ms. Elisabeth Handley. This Program is the portal to the NCI for liaison organizations and consumer advocacy groups, and serves NCI by market testing NCI's messages and materials. The *Media and Public Communications Program* is overseen by Mr. James Mathews, who is serving as Acting Associate Director. This Program is the primary point of contact for the news media and for public inquiries about NCI's research and activities. The *Technologies and Services Program* is headed by Mr. Michael Moore. This Program identifies and applies appropriate communications technologies to improve communications products and services and aids NCI staff in research-based Web site design and development and other electronic information and reference services.

Subcommittee Member Comments: What Should a Communications Program Look Like?

Using the World Wide Web to Disseminate Cancer Information. Dr. Samir Abu-Ghazaleh expressed support for the OC's Web-based communications efforts and noted that, in his experience, patients who use computers as an information-gathering tool receive better health care because they can identify and evaluate more resources. He suggested that greater

availability of computers and more access to the Internet should be encouraged. Dr. Love agreed, stating that first-time Web users are more likely to seek health information than any other type of information. Most public libraries have Internet capability for public use. Dr. Frederick Li suggested that computers in schools would be an effective way to deliver Web-based health information, especially health promotion and disease prevention programs such as the National 5 A Day for Better Health Communications Program and tobacco use prevention. Dr. Sharp pointed out that school-age children might need sites offering more than health information—for example, sites that would direct them to sources of emotional support in the event a family member developed cancer.

Dr. James French remarked that 20 percent of his patients have come to his office through searching the World Wide Web—a percentage much higher than he had expected. He also stated that the mission and goals of a communications program should dovetail with the forthcoming recommendations of the President's Cancer Panel in reaching underserved populations. In response, Dr. Sieber said that an OC staff member was on detail to the Center for Health Disparities to learn more about communications for underserved populations.

Measuring the Impact of Cancer Communications. In response to a Subcommittee member's question regarding whether there were any plans to measure the effects of communications campaigns on health care, Dr. Barbara Rimer, Director, Division of Cancer Control and Population Sciences (DCCPS), described the Division's plans for conducting, in collaboration with the cancer centers, research on major problems facing cancer communications. DCCPS is partnering with the Cancer Information Service to find new ways to close the digital divide, working with various community agencies, schools, and other delivery sites. She cited the RFA for the Centers for Excellence in Communications as another example of NCI's emphasis on cancer communications, and she said her Division had fielded a national survey to track data on knowledge and beliefs about health behaviors. Dr. Rimer noted that the survey will oversample minorities to determine where communications efforts were falling short among minority populations. Dr. Klausner explained that NCI has a legislative requirement to communicate information and has decided to build a research interface. He suggested that the Special Populations Networks (SPNs) might be an effective vehicle for reaching special populations with cancer communications. Dr. Amelie Ramirez said that one goal of the SPNs was to help increase awareness of cancer information among different groups. She asked how the OC and the Center for Health Disparities could work together on such problems. She also pointed out that NCI and its grantees, working together, could produce a synergy for broader outreach.

Dr. Robert Croyle, Assistant Director for Behavioral Research, DCCPS, stressed the breadth of the research grant portfolio related to communications. He gave as an example the funding of grants under the Small Business Innovation Research program to develop health communications technologies, particularly for youth. He explained that the products are evaluated for their impact and the ability to change behavior. In response to a question, Dr. Croyle said that the Centers for Excellence in Communications would offer training to practitioners in a wide variety of disciplines.

Physician and Health Communications. Dr. Norton emphasized that physicians must be included in communications efforts, since most patients get their health information from their physicians. The American Society for Clinical Oncology (ASCO) has launched a program to

